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Mission and Missionaries

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Transforming God's mission in today's world



Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you"
Mt. 28:19-20

When we think of "God's mission" we think immediately of the missionaries who were sent out to convert people to Christianity and expand Christendom. As individuals or as groups, with a life-long commitment or for a period of years, missionaries go out to spread the Gospel. We have seen some missionaries standing at corners of the road, in front of department stores, or in public parks preaching and distributing biblical leaflets. Some combine their preaching mission with educational initiatives, others with health care, and some are into socio-economic development projects.

The hostage taking of twenty-three Korean Christian relief workers by the Taliban militants in Afghanistan in mid-2007 resulted in the killing of three hostages before the rest were eventually freed. That incident called for a theological and missiological rethinking and debate. It raised questions such as: what is "mission" all about; what and how do our principles of mission apply to Asian realities? and how do we do mission in Asia today?

Asia has a plurality of ethnic groups, cultures, traditions and religions. Many of the world's major religions - e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism and Sikhism - were born here and became the national identities of some Asian countries. Many Christian missionaries won converts mostly from ethnic minority and outcaste groups who were never attached to those so-called national religions in their respective countries.

Poverty in Asia is so widespread and glaring. Asia has a few economically developed countries and the lowest per capita income in the world. Urban areas show signs of progress, but many rural areas remain underdeveloped or are sinking into even deeper poverty.

In light of these realities, the church's mission has to be revisited. God's mission requires that we listen to 'the other' and proclaim Jesus Christ in a situation that is overwhelmingly non-Christian. It requires that we identify the church with the poor and the oppressed and their struggle for liberation (Luke 4:18-19, Matthews 25:31-45); understand fully the soul of Asia to accept wholeheartedly the call to mission, and learn how to bring effectively the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its fruits to Asia.

God's mission is a confirmation of Jesus' ministry of kerygma (proclamation), diakonia (service) and koinonia (fellowship). It is not just the numerical and geographical expansion of the Christian faith nor is it a form of ecclesiastical propaganda. It is how we, Christians from different denominations, appreciate our different ways of living out God's mission and find that unity in our given diversities.

God's mission is an activity through which the church is called to make a difference in and to the world. Our sense of being "called" and "sent" by God is to bring about change to the whole human person, to the poor and the marginalized, and to the web of life on earth. It is responding to God calling us, in the words of Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung, "out of our comfortable ghettos of 'us' and 'them' to risk discipleship without walls". This is one meaningful way of interpreting our 13th General Assembly theme, "Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal".

Prawate Khid-arn

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Cover photo:
Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung and colleague
planting a coconut tree at the new
APPCS campus.

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reflect the policies or positions of CCA.

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On the way outside the gate

After opting to end my 'unfinished' ministry with CCA as a Joint Executive Secretary of Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service at the closure of the Hong Kong Office in 2006, I was called to serve as 'president' of the Manila Presbyterian Theological Seminary (MPTS), a Korean Presbyterian missionary-founded theological institute in Manila. Ironically speaking, when it was established nineteen years ago, I criticized its establishment because of its irrelevance to local churches in the Philippines, particularly to the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in which many reformed churches were costly united for the visible unity of churches; and because of its 19th century colonial enlightenment structure in a post-mission era. Since then it has been a missionary-centered, Korean denomination-bound, theological ecclesiological ghetto.

Following my inauguration in November 2006, MPTS soon changed to Asia-Pacific Christian College and Seminary (APCCS), making a rather 'radical' paradigm shift in its formation with an ecumenical vision and evangelistic passion in Asia-Pacific contexts. First, this meant moving from a denomination-bound missionary-centered structure to an ecumenically interdependent structure in cooperation with the mainline churches in the Philippines. Second, this meant developing an integrative urban-rural field-centered, culture/context-bound theological education system for Gospel-centered orthopraxis with an integrative interdisciplinary hermeneutical praxis-centered curriculum. Third, this meant establishing an urban-rural ecological full boarding international community in Montalban, Rizal as "the Church of Christ Outside the Gate" where uprooted people's communities with diverse socio-economic, religio-cultural, ethnic-environmental backgrounds are relocated. Fourth, developing a new recruitment system on the basis of responsible

recommendation from local networks of church and/or mission in the Philippines and other Asia-Pacific countries, on the promise that after graduation students will return to their local networks to serve their churches and people. Fifth, this meant establishing an Asia-Pacific network for praxis-centered theological education movement, an ecumenical-evangelical consortium of locally-rooted theological institutes in the Asia-Pacific region for the program on Asia-Pacific Graduate School for Integrative Practical Theology for Healing and Reconciliation.

APCCS also develops and practices a circle of three-interrelated spirituality as a manifested Christian lifestyle: first, the spirituality of Kenosis (self-emptying) under the cross of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-11) as a process of metanoia; second, the spirituality of just interdependence as a process of costly koinonia (Acts 2:43-47); and third, the spirituality of compassion for our neighbors as a process of mission-in-diakonia (Hebrews 13:12-16).

APCCS particularly emphasizes the healing and reconciliation ministry of Jesus Christ toward the fullness of life for all (Colossians 1:14-23) through a three-interrelated mission task: first, evangelization by spreading God's word (John 3:16); second, humanization by responding to the concerns of the poor, deprived and oppressed (Luke 4: 18-19), and third, ecological integration by being good stewards of God's creation and protectors of the sanctity of the oikoumene (Genesis 1:31; Revelation 21:1-5).

Through an inter-cultural/contextual praxis-centered education, APCCS motivates and empowers students to participate in God's mission in Asia-Pacific by promoting healing and reconciliation through kenotic mission; enhancing a visible unity among local churches and societies in Christ; enforcing an ecumenically sustainable local church growth by empowering the inter-local global web of life; enhancing

people's security and sovereignty for life and peace; and integrating ecology and health for wholeness.

On the way outside the gate, APCCS as a theological community of the poor has kept on praying the Lord's Prayer, struggling for our right to life and education in the midst of a situation where millions of people are virtually dying and being deprived of their right to education due to the lack of just distribution and sharing in our extremely polarized and globalized world. In the context of the denomination-bound missionary-centered tribalism, a theological cold war consciousness, and the financial captivity of Korean churches and mission societies, it has been proven as one of the most unachievable tasks for APCCS to become a praxis-centered Asia-Pacific ecumenical theological institute.

Mission should not be monopolized by any particular group with financial power and for their social privilege. Missionaries, very much including myself, should not be a hindrance but a stepping stone to open a narrow but authentic way to the land of promise. Local church leaders need to more carefully watch out what missionaries are doing in their

garden and creatively interrupt their ministries so that the integrity of local churches-in-mission and partnership-in-mission will be strengthened. The authenticity of missionaries' work should be proved by promoting the visible unity of local churches. Therefore not only missionaries but also local church leaders should return the ownership of mission to God by doing a kenotic mission, starting from and returning to the people's reality, respecting local congregations, going beyond our boundaries, emptying selves of human desires and hegemonic interests.

The other side of God's mission is always expressed through people's mission to missionaries and churches. The Good News is initially heralded not from missionaries and churches but from the poor, the have-nots, the marginalized as God's people. This is precisely the reason why we confess that God comes to the people before missionaries and churches come to them. Missionaries and churches should first and always learn what God has been doing among God's people, while they are participating in a global-local mission today. In this case, a participatory process should be the way of



APCCS students with local children in a learning center during the social service week in Montalban, Rizal.

doing mission-in-partnership with people today.

On the way to Montalban, and outside of the gate, I believe, God call us out of our comfortable ghettos of 'us' and 'them' to risk discipleship without walls. God keeps on beckoning us out of our safe havens into God's transformative fellowship of challenge and reconciliation, faith and hope. I dream of APCCS in Montalban weaving, locally and inter-locally at global level, a pattern of peace and justice, a pattern of healing and reconciliation, a pattern of hope and joy among people in different situations.

In the process of developing a new paradigm of APCCS in Montalban, I always confess the Lordship of God as the Latin American martyr Archbishop Oscar Romero once beautifully described, "God's kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. God's kingdom always lies beyond us...." That is what we human beings are all about. We are all limited. As he continued, "We only plant the seeds that one day will grow. We faithfully water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We humbly lay foundations that will need further development. We carefully provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.... What we can do may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is precisely the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."

Lee Hong Jung



Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung is a people/praxis-centered ecumenical missiologist who identifies himself as a migrant worker, rather than an ordained minister or missionary, for restoring God's broken and wounded web of Life, promoting a mission strategy of weaving inter-locally interdependent web of life at regional and global levels. He served as Director of the former Center for North East Asian Mission Studies in Birmingham University, as Director of Planning and Ecumenical Relations in the Presbyterian Church of Korea, as a Commissioner of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, as Joint Executive Secretary of Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service, Christian Conference of Asia. Living out a voluntary poverty in the Philippines, he is currently working on developing an Asia-Pacific Ecumenical Institute which includes the APCCS, the Asia-Pacific Graduate School of Integrative Practical Theology, and other relevant centers.

Dr. Lee firmly believes that by doing praxis-centered inter-cultural/contextual theological education world churches can restore the transformative power of the Gospel in their local contexts.

Ecumenism and feminism

In response to a request from PERSETIA (Association of Theological Schools in Indonesia), I spent a week doing lectures on ecumenism and Asian feminist theology as part of the offering at the 2009 Summer School for Graduate Students last July 21-24. Almost ninety graduate students from all over Indonesia attended the program hosted by the HKBP Theological School in Pematang Siantar.

The summer school aimed at providing graduate students an opportunity: (a) to gain international experience by bringing Christian scholars from abroad to teach; (b) to fellowship and develop an ecumenical spirit as leaders of the churches; and (c) for in-depth discussion on issues facing the church and society.

For the first three days, my inputs were on the wider ecumenism, its biblical/theological foundations and its implications for mission and evangelism. Inputs on the last two days were on clarifying the

nature of Asian feminist theology and going through the spiral of Asian feminist theologizing.

"Does having a wider ecumenical vision mean that we have to lower or reduce the uniqueness of Christ?" One student asked following the input on wider ecumenical vision. The wider ecumenical vision encompasses intrafaith and interfaith relations and dialogue, collaboration with civil society working for peace and justice, and sustaining the integrity of the whole creation. Such a wider vision indeed requires deconstructing what uniqueness means. For Jesus, uniqueness did not mean putting himself on a pedestal for everyone to see that he is the best, if not the only way; or waving a flag to show that our religion is the best. Rather, he "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant" and "humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:6-8)



Participants and resource persons



Dr. Hope S. Antone (CCA-FMU) and Rev. Dr. Tabita Kartika Christiani (project officer of the Persetia Summer School for Graduate Students) receive gifts of Batak cloth and listen to words of thanks from students at the end of the program.

Although many of the graduate students (majority are ordained pastors and lecturers of some theological institutions) are very aware of and well-read about the discourse on pluralism and universalism there were still those who were uncomfortable with the wider vision. PERSETIA member schools include seminaries from mainline Protestant churches and Evangelical churches in Indonesia.

The only Muslim student in the group (whose presence in the program is part of an intentional program on Christian-Muslim understanding among universities in Indonesia) asked how far the wider ecumenical vision is being embraced by the churches. Obviously, embracing the ecumenical vision will require churches to think beyond the desire for self-propagation and self-preservation, in order to see and participate in where God is already present and at work in this vast, plural and diverse world that God created.

The last two days for Asian feminist theologizing proved to be very challenging and interesting. I learned so much from

the students' sharing as they tried to use the spiral of Asian feminist theologizing.

A number of the students from Sumba shared about the caste system, which continues to this day. People belong to the master caste, ordinary class, or slave caste. Noble men marry many wives and keep many slaves. Aside from the caste system and slavery, polygamy and polyandry as systems of marriage are also still followed, even among Christian families. These issues are related to injustice and sometimes violence. "What can we do in such a situation? The church is silent and has no way but to bless such marriages."

Students from other ethnic groups spoke of other forms of oppression such as the dowry system or giving of bride price which is regarded as the purchase of one's wife and a license to do anything with one's property; the practice of contract marriage, which is a short-term marriage only to 'prevent' one from engaging in illicit affair or prostitution. Raising these issues showed how concerned many of these graduate students were for gender justice. Using the spiral of feminist theologizing, they tried to deconstruct various cultural and biblical teachings that condone the oppression and called for a liberation and equality perspective in theologizing and living.

The summer school is a unique program of PERSETIA that brings together graduate students (master's level) from all over the country for intensive study on a particular topic. This year, the two-week program had more than just a topic for aside from wider ecumenism and Asian feminist theologizing in the second week, two other scholars, one from the USA and another from Indonesia, focused on other topics like pastoral care, and the challenges of Karl Marx and scientific atheism to faith.

Hope S. Antone

Children's Peace Camp

Doing justice and seeking God's Shalom (Isa. 10:1-2)

Children and young people learn and live the way of peace more easily. They do not have a problem with language, as they can speak the language of peace.

A third Regional Children's Peace Conference will be hosted by Japanese churches in mid-August 2010. About 40 children from ages 10 to 15 will be invited to a camp outside Tokyo to study the Bible, play peace games and share meals for five days under the tutelage of Japanese pastors working with children and youth. The first two peace conferences were held in 2005 and 2007, respectively. This year, the invitation is extended to Korean, Taiwanese and Hong Kong children.

Along with an annual School of Peace, the Children's Peace Camp is one of the more regular programs undertaken by church leaders from Northeast Asia.

Another joint program in northeast Asia is the Women's Gathering, which will be co-hosted by the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) and the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK). Taiwan and HongKong will be invited in the next Gathering in 2010. These programs are organized under the auspices of the Churches Forum on Peace and People's Security in Northeast Asia, otherwise known as The Churches' Forum.

The Churches' Forum is an ecumenical platform initiated by National Councils of Churches in the northeast Asian region and supported by the Christian Conference of Asia, to promote and build peace and security from the people's perspective. Its main activities include the provision of peace education, organizing peace activities like the children's peace camp, information sharing, and networking among Councils and beyond.

The Rev. Po KC, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council is the current Moderator of the Forum. Rapporteur

is Charlie Ocampo, CCA Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service.

The Forum meeting in Tokyo held at the Korean YMCA Hotel last May 23-24 approved the Forum's Terms of Reference, including a clause for membership, coordination, program planning, decision-making processes and financial support. The next meeting will be on February 26-28, 2010, to be hosted by the National Council of Churches in Taiwan (NCCT).

Charlie Ocampo



Participants at the 2008 Children's Peace Camp

The grassroots women's movement:

Nurturing ecumenism

Grassroots women lay the foundation of the Asian ecumenical movement through their contributions in sowing seeds of peace. However, their contributions are often overlooked or underestimated by church and society. Rev. Dr Unha Chai, moderator of the Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) cluster of CCA, points out that even though Asian church women form the big part of church membership, they are not represented in church structures and decision making processes. Though grassroots women church leaders, activists and minjung women have a long history of suffering, they survive because of their spirituality of hope and justice.

To nurture the spirituality of grassroots women church leaders and activists, CCA organized a Grassroots Women Activists and Church Leaders Capacity Enhancement Training in partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) on June 9-15, 2009, in Seoul, Korea. Fifteen minjung women church leaders and grassroots activists from Nepal, East Timor, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Malaysia, India, and Indonesia participated in this training.

The objectives of the training were: to support participants' empowerment initiatives and networking to promote human rights for women and children migrant workers, refugees, urban slum dwellers in Asia; to equip participants with new strategies for organizing and theologizing as tools for empowerment; and, to promote intergenerational sharing, learning and networking.

Theologizing experiences

Asian grassroots women weave their theologies from their involvement in building local communities of peace. Rev. Dr Un Hey Kim, a feminist theologian pastoring a minjung church, shared that grassroots women need to create a model

of participatory leadership focused on life and peace and evolving from their spirituality. Therefore, it is important to rethink and re-evaluate various kinds of women's ways of seeing, thinking, and acting which, for a long time have been suppressed, marginalized and considered inferior even by the Church.

Bangladeshi participant Bonney Roderick, counseling spouses of Bangladeshi migrant workers and Stella Mondol who works in a garment factory, shared that Bangladeshi women, despite abject poverty, suffering and oppression have not lost their faith in transforming society. Both added that grassroots women's theologies are not documented and published but are integral part of their spiritualities woven through daily life. Such spiritualities form the foundation of the ecumenical movement in Asia.

Spiritualities of resistance

Participants shared stories to build communities of peace. The exposure trip to Dasom Church and Osan Migrant Workers Center enabled them to understand the prophetic role of the church in serving the marginalized. Rev Chang Won Jang, director of Osan Migrant workers Center, shared with participants 'Jesus Paradigms of Organizing People' in peaceful resistance for factory and migrant workers.

Participants visited a factory where more than 2000 workers were on strike, and joined a gathering of more than 1500 factory workers inside the factory and shared a fellowship meal with them. A dialogue with union leaders followed where some participants shared stories from their own contexts to inspire factory workers in their quest for justice. Ms Moumita Biswas encouraged the striking workers saying that Asian churches and CCA are in solidarity with them and will keep them in their prayers.

Dialogue of hope and faith in action

PCK facilitated a 'dialogue of hope' with women leaders from the National Organization of Korean and Presbyterian Women. Korean church women leaders shared the history of women's ordination in Korea, and how minjung women are involved in the people's movement reflecting their faith in action. Participants from Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh shared that many in their countries do not know women could be ordained. They were inspired to learn about the Korean women's struggle for a 'discipleship of equals'.

Mission of healing and reconciliation

Rev Sun Young Han, a pastor from a minjung Saeteo Church, shared that grassroots women leaders and activists who take care of others often go through burnout and depression due to persecution, suffering and neglect. Churches thus have to support them and heal the wounds of 'those who heal the wounds of others'.

Giffiyani Kristain Nayona from Indonesia, an intern of Frontier Mission in Timor Leste, expressed that the healing ministry can be cross-cultural and extends beyond given boundaries. As an Indonesian, she feels the need to repent of the sin of persecution inflicted on the people of Timor Leste. Churches in both countries

play a crucial role to heal and reconcile, to wipe away memories of torture and horror. Griffiyani's commitment to serve as a missionary to grassroots communities in Timor Leste bears witness to the way women translate faith into action.

Member churches' solidarity

One reason for the success of this training was member churches' ownership of the CCA-EGY program for ecumenical formation and human rights of grassroots women. PCK not only hosted this training but the leaders of PCK were fully involved in participatory planning and implementation. This shows member Churches' solidarity in strengthening grassroots ecumenical movement. Asian ecumenical movement has its roots in people's movement for justice and peace. The training program aimed to nurture that spirit of ecumenism. Upon their return participants are expected to do follow up work in partnership with their churches and councils.

To Rev. Kim Kyung In, Executive Secretary of Ecumenical Relations and Planning of PCK, Rev. Jin Bang Joo Jin, Rev. Jung Eun Moon, Rev. Jin So Park and many other leaders, CCA expresses its enormous thanks.

Moumita Biswas



Participants in solidarity with striking workers in Seoul, Korea

Building competencies

CCA policy statement on HIV and AIDS

Upon the mandate of the CCA General Committee that met in Dhaka, Bangladesh in September 2008, a special committee looked at the pastoral guidelines which it hopes to become CCA's HIV and Aids Policy. The proposed HIV and Aids policy is now ready to be presented to the members of the General Committee on October 1, 2009.

The draft policy statement was an outcome of a 'writeshop' (short for writing workshop) held at Hotel Dhyana Pura Beach Resort in Bali, Indonesia on August 5-6, 2009, which was followed by an interfaith conference and skills building workshop on HIV and AIDS also in the same hotel on August 7-8, 2009. Bali turned out to be an ideal venue for the meeting because the Protestant Church in Bali and its foundation, Maha Borga Marga (MBM) are both engaged in HIV and AIDS ministry. Bali as a tourist destination has many bars and entertainment establishments. Of 993 persons tested for HIV from 2005-2009, 330 tested positive in the VCT Merpati Clinic, according to Dr. Made Nyandi, a psychiatrist and an active member of the Protestant Church in Bali. In July 2009 alone, out of thirty-one tested for HIV, fourteen turned out to be positive. Voluntary and confidential counseling and testing are given to people who are tested, and those who tested positive are supported by the Marga Borga Boha.

The special committee was headed by Mrs. Manju Baroi, one of the Presidents of CCA. Other members were Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, CCA General Secretary, Mr. Kingphet Thammavong, Coordinator of the Tribal Ministry of the Lao Evangelical Church (designated representative of Rev. Dr. Khamphone Kounthapanya), Ms. Elijah Fung, Program Manager of the HIV Education Center of the St. John Cathedral (designated representative of

Rt. Rev. Thomas So Yee Po), Rev. Fr. Philip Kuruvilla of the Syrian Malankara Orthodox Church, India (designated representative of Ms. Susan Jacob of the same church), and Ms. Dominica Faurillo, CCA Ecumenical Accompanier in Timor Leste.

Resource persons included Mr. Greg Manning representing the Micah Network and the World Evangelical Alliance, Mr. Calle Almedal, Consultant, HIV Competent Churches, World Council of Churches, Dr. Alphinus Kambodji, Coordinator of the United Evangelical Mission Anti AIDS Program, Rev. Sanan Wutti, Director of the Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS Ministry (CAM), and Mr. Caesar D'Mello, Director, Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism. Those who were co-opted in the writing of the Statement were Ms. Arlyn D'Mello, an anthropologist from Australia and Rev. Gomar Gultom, Coordinator, Diakonia, Communion of Churches in Indonesia. Two people living with HIV and Aids from Chiang Mai gave moving testimonies on living positively with HIV and AIDS with the help of CAM.

Bishop Dr Wayan Sudira Husada of the Protestant Christian Church in Bali welcomed the writers and resource persons. Rev. Made Priana prepared the opening worship and gave a reflection together with Dr. Made Nyandra, psychiatrist from a public hospital and counselor of the VCT Merpati Clinic. Rev. Nengah Suama, Director of the Maha Borga Marga (MBM) of the Protestant Church in Bali participated by giving her input on what the Bali churches are doing in HIV and AIDS.

Writing the Statement was not easy. The group listened and reacted to thought provoking questions raised by Mr. Calle Almedal as he challenged the churches

to look inward and discover the problem within the church. Building HIV competent churches meant building both inner and outer competencies - what he called "in-reach" and "out-reach". One of the questions was on the stewardship of time.

"If we use so much time concentrating on a minority sexuality how are we going to be able to address all problems of the majority sexuality, which we need to do to be credible, righteous, humble and, above all, very honest? And remember, that this is in-reach or reaching from within.

He gave some examples:

- Fifteen or twenty years ago a Swedish sociologist looked at domestic violence in relation to the husband's occupation, what work he did for a living. The number one group of men beating their wives in this research was pastors and priests.
- An African Bishop proudly showed me the special stick he has to beat his wife. A WHO report states that "studies conducted by various NGOs and institutions in 1995 and 1997 in Delhi revealed that more than half the girls have experienced sexual abuse by a family member and 76% of women in five cities in India admitted having been sexually abused as a child.
- One study in Los Angeles showed that 27% of the women and 16% of the men had been sexually abused as children. The Population Reference Bureau states that 18% of women in Cambodia are victims of domestic violence.
- In Violence Against Women, Holly Johnson reports that of the 6677 thousand interviewed women in Australia, 48% were victims of physical violence, 34 % of sexual violence and 29 % of childhood violence.

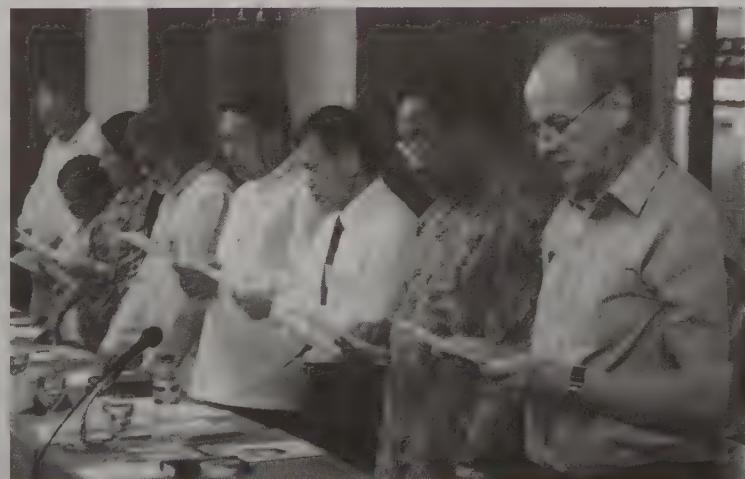
Churches are part of societies, so those figures are probably the same in churches, even I must add, that it is extremely difficult to get reliable figures on domestic violence, especially sexual one, including incest. So the above figures are meant to illustrate problems that we really do not

deal with. However, I strongly suggest you read the WHO Report on "Women's health and domestic violence" of 2005, on the WHO website under "gender violence".

My questions are: Would it not be more honest and correct, and in line with Jesus' teaching on throwing stones, if we, in a non-judgmental way, discuss problems related to majority sexuality before we start pointing fingers to minority sexualities? Do we really have time to argue about MSM (men having sex with men) and other sexualities, when there seemingly is so much to do in heterosexuality?"

Once the CCA General Committee pass the Statement, the Churches and Councils of Churches will have to face more challenges. It is time to conduct a seminar on theology and AIDS and to start building the competencies of churches in HIV and AIDS. The time to act is now.

Erlinda Senturias



Writeshop participants from left to right: Calle Almedal, Dominica Faurillo, Manju Baroi, Fr. Philip Kuruvilla, Rev. Sanan Wutti, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, Bishop Dr. I Wyan Sudira Husada, Rev. John Lewis

End human trafficking!

Missioning with Sinag Kababaihan

Life in its fullness for young women and children is the vision of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) South Luzon Jurisdiction for its ministry to street hawkers or freelance sex workers in the streets of Manila. Sinag Kababaihan (literally meaning 'light women' or women serving as light) is an organization of women ministering to prostituted women through a Women's Center in Cubao, Quezon City. The project is part of UCCP's healing ministry to address the historic problems of domination, inequality in economic opportunities and resources, oppression and exploitation of less privileged and marginalized Filipinos especially women and children.

The Programs of Sinag Kababaihan started as a modest venture to deal with the endemic problem of prostitution and seek ways by which the church can effectively and concretely respond. It was born out of UCCP's earnest desire to serve as a refuge home for women and children who need to be cared for, listened to, understood, empowered and inspired. Sinag Kababaihan was revitalized in 2008 and is a pioneering venture in this area of ministry among evangelical Protestant groups. On July 3, 2008 the Women's Center was inaugurated. The Center's nursery school gives space and nurture children of street workers and other disadvantaged women.

The activities of Sinag Kababaihan revolves around awareness and capacity building of women on their basic rights and assisting them in formulating action plans responsive to their needs and problems. Sinag Kababaihan educates the local church on issues of violence against women and children, and their responsibility to end harassment and child abuse. It aims to equip its staff and volunteers to work with disadvantaged

women with necessary skills in organizing and handling clients; and to encourage them to find other alternative sources of income. It also has a Mobile Drop-in Center which works as retreat area for street dwellers. Other activities include medical, dental and counseling services.

Accompanying UCCP to promote gender justice

The Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea is accompanying UCCP in its mission to street workers. The Sinag Kababaihan Women Center was made possible with the support of PROK. This is a unique example of how Asian churches can support and be in partnership in the promotion of gender justice. The relationship between PROK and UCCP South Luzon Jurisdiction transcends a relationship where the richer partner grants money to another in need as an act of charity. The women leaders of PROK are actively involved in solidarity with women leaders of UCCP. They journey together to witness and understand the plight of street workers and disadvantaged women in both countries. They reflect together on the root causes of exploitation and find ways to alleviate and to help the churches' in advocating on such issues.

During the first anniversary celebration of the Women's Center on July 2-3, women from both PROK and UCCP along with some street hawkers gathered together to deliberate, share and reflect in a forum on 'Combating Human Trafficking'.

Bishop Jessie S. Suarez of UCCP Southern Luzon Jurisdiction and Rev Shin Seung Min of PROK invited CCA to express its solidarity with churches in combating violence against women and human trafficking. At the Forum attended by more than a hundred women and men leaders on July 3, I was given

the opportunity to share strategies on 'ecumenical formation' to combat human trafficking.

Many Asian church leaders think that gender justice is an agenda of women and their liberation only. Now it is time for Asian churches to engage in ecumenical formation for men and women as well as for church leaders. This is essential if Asian churches want to engage in a mission to end violence against women and children, and combat human trafficking.

It is also important to engage in the ministry of rehabilitating men clients patronizing street hawkers and to address the root causes of prostitution essential in building inclusive communities of peace.

Furthermore, I shared CCA's role in partnership with member churches in ecumenical formation for gender justice.

CCA has started the gender justice school - Training of Trainers Program, which will be held in Asian sub-regions participated by both men and women church leaders. There is also a human rights training for women grassroots activists and lay leaders with a gender justice perspective. CCA also works with the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP) in its ministry among migrant workers addressing human trafficking in the Mekong region.

Sinag Kabaibahan is an inspiration to churches to engage in the ministry of healing broken relationships among men and women, and between humankind and God the Creator.

Moumita Biswas



Ms Biswas with the Sinag Kabaibahan women at the Women's Center

Chosen by God?



Divinity School students at the Silliman University Founders Day Parade a day before the Church Workers Convocation

“If the concept of election (chosen by God) is wrong, does it mean to say that we should drop the Bible?” A senior pastor raised this question following the two Bible studies led by Dr. Hope S. Antone, executive secretary of CCA-Faith, Mission and Unity, at the 48th Church Workers Convocation of Silliman University Divinity School in Dumaguete City, Philippines on 28-30 August 2009.

Addressing the convocation theme, “Theological Education in the Midst of Crisis: Prospects and Challenges,” Antone pointed out that aside from the socio-economic-political crises besetting everyone, theological education is often times faced with a crisis in theology and vision. She led a re-reading of Luke 4:16-30 and affirmed that Jesus’ engagement in theological education was biblically rooted, contextually grounded, oriented to

the “year of the Lord’s favor” [or the reign of God] and was meant for all people.

However, the understanding of the people who initially marveled at Jesus’ words and then later on wanted to throw him off the cliff was that all that Jesus said was only for them - the “chosen people” of God. The same idea runs in the story of Jonah, used in the second Bible study. Jonah’s theology viewed God as choosing the people of Israel and vindicating them from their enemies. So Jonah could not take it when God asked him to go to Nineveh (their enemy) to announce the good news to them!

Christians have inherited and Christianized the Jewish concept of election, of being the “chosen people” of God, the new Israel, so that our theology is so often exclusive and our attitude to people who are not Christians or who may be Christians but do not belong to our denomination can be condemning or condescending. While the whole concept of election has been explained by many Bible scholars as a calling to a big responsibility or mission rather than a granting of license and privilege, what has happened is that certain people feel that because they are the “chosen ones” they deserve to exist but others don’t. This is at the root of the problem in Israel and Palestine right now. It is also at the root of our problem in Asia in relation to people of other faiths, other races or ethnicities, other sexual orientation, people with HIV/AIDS, etc.

The crisis in theology and vision in theological education is due to our limited or preferred understanding of God’s will and purpose, which may be self-serving and self-centered. We have to expand our vision and theology, change our curriculum and mission statement, review our programs and projects. There is no need to drop the Bible. As Jesus demonstrated, we have to critically read the Bible, taking other perspectives, not only the dominant or official perspective.

The two Bible studies were conducted as ecumenical lectures at the convocation of more than 400 church workers from all over the country.

Bishop Eliezer Pascua, general secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, gave the keynote address at the opening of the convocation. Using 2 Peter 1:5-10, he spoke of theological education as ministerial faith formation in the virtues of goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection and love. Seminarians should be "students not only with brains but also with hearts; not only with minds but also with souls," the UCCP head emphasized.

Stressing the need for theory and practice to go together, Bishop Pascua said, "Seminaries should not be seen as mere repacking or re-canning factories of theological de lata (canned goods) and seminarians as vendors of the same" for the task of theological education is not

something that seminaries can do alone. In fact, it is the people from the pews, the street, the fields and the market who provide theological raw materials.

In his theme exposition, the Rev. Dr. A. Wati Longchar, dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program of the Serampore College in India, emphasized that the role of theological education is to form or equip people in the local congregation for faith, witness and service. Hence, theological education ought to take place "together with people" and based on a critical solidarity with the victims. This calls for inclusive curriculum in theology that promotes plurality and the common good.

Hope S. Antone



Church workers do meditative exercise before the Bible study

Ecumenical journey continues



From the left:
Rev. Freddy de
Alwis, Mr. Charlie
Ocampo, Bishop
PJ and Shinta
Lawrence, and
Rev. Dr Rienzie
Perera

Bishop PJ Lawrence attended a Theological Workshop on the CCA Assembly theme, "Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal" in Chiang Mai this September. He stayed back for a few days which saw him poring over books and other ecumenical documents in the CCA Library. For Bishop Lawrence, he is continuing his ecumenical journey after being away from Asia for sixteen years.

The Bishop's ecumenical journey was inspired by the Urban Rural Mission (URM) movement in the early 1970's in Bombay when he accompanied the establishment of BUILD (Bombay Urban Industrial League Development), which became a meeting point for ecumenical friends in India, including Rajan Singh, George Ninan (now bishop in the Episcopal Church in the US), Anant Joshi and Harry Daniel (former CCA Associate General Secretary).

Through a scholarship organized by the Rev. Harry Daniel in CCA, he went to the Philippines for a year in 1979, where he met leaders of peasant organizations, trade unions, and urban poor communities around Southern Luzon, Baguio and Midsayap in Cotabato. His experience in the Philippines presented ecumenical challenges to his faith, theology and sense of mission.

His ecumenical journey took him to the Caribbean, where he served as Director at the Institute for Theological and Leadership Development (ITLD) from 1990, based in Jamaica, shuttling to

Cayman Islands from time to time. ITLD offered him an opportunity to try out a new approach to theological education combining weekly seminary training and three weeks of local ministry placement, closely following an action-reflection method of learning.

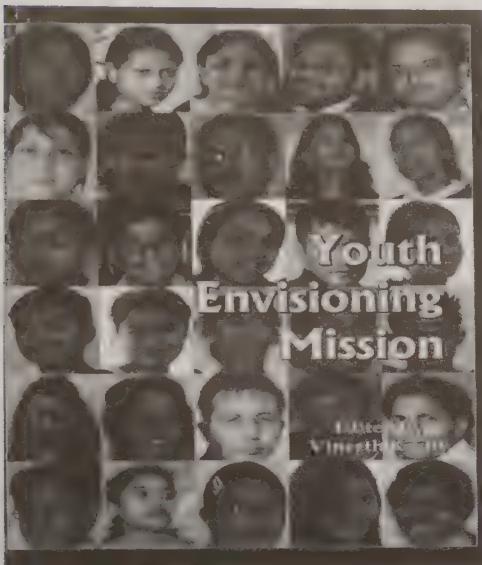
His vision for the future includes setting up an ecumenical initiative for leadership formation through action and reflection, also called 'praxis' with the support of a collective of ecumenical friends in the south of India. This institute will be based in a village in Mutyalapadu in Andra Pradesh.

He is excited about possibilities for CCA in the years to come. These include training church workers to engage in people's issues, especially those relating to the marginalized and the exploited; to give back to the communities experiences in organizing and networking learned from the URM program, thus getting empowered by the gospel imperative of listening and learning from the struggles of the poor in our communities.

Bishop PJ is humbly challenged by the need to rediscover theology and ideology that will guide the churches in training ecumenical leaders who can revisit the past and continue on with the journey of people's empowerment. He wants to remind the churches to not only dwell on the demise of the socialist alternative but to heighten the work for peace and justice and the re-reading of scriptures.

Charlie Ocampo

Youth Envisioning Mission



Youth Envisioning Mission, published by the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), is a 121-page collection of presentations, speeches and general views discussed at the various sessions during the 2008 NCCI Youth Pre-Assembly held in Shillong, India in 2008. Issues covered by the articles include sexual health, environmental justice, and responsible citizenry as discussed from the perspective of the Indian youth.

The book provides a valuable resource on current issues faced by the youth all across Asia in their churches and communities. To obtain a copy please contact: Fr. Vineeth Koshy (Tel. +91-9764001712 / Email: vineethkoshy@gmail.com: ncci@nccindia.in)

We Live by His Gifts

We Live by His Gifts is a personal account by S. Wesley Ariarajah of D.T. Niles as a preacher, teacher and ecumenist. Dr Ariarajah has known D.T. Niles for some seventeen years as his pastor, principal of the school where he studied, and as the head of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka which he served. More importantly, Niles had been Ariarajah's theological and spiritual mentor, who paved the way for his own involvement in the ecumenical movement.

The 172-page book published by the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue (EISD, Sri Lanka) is a fascinating account of D.T. Niles as a man, preacher, teacher and ecumenist that is authentic, engaging, revealing and inspiring. Through many concrete stories of his own encounters with Niles, Ariarajah delves deeply into the faith, faithfulness, commitment, and vision that guided this most famous Sri Lankan Christian who was celebrated in all parts of the world as one of the greatest preachers and ecumenists of his time.

WE LIVE BY HIS GIFTS

D. T. NILES

PREACHER, TEACHER, AND ECUMENIST

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

by

S. WESLEY ARIARAJAH

D.T. Niles was the General Secretary of the EACC or the East Asia Christian Conference (now known as the Christian Conference of Asia) from 1957 to 1968; and became the Chairperson of the EACC from 1968 to 1970. He was also one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches and president of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka until he passed away on July 17, 1970.

To order a copy, email EISD: eisda@sltnet.lk

New ATESEA officers

The General Assembly of the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) that met in Malang, Indonesia on 2-5 July 2009 elected a new set of officers.

The new elected executive committee members are: Rev. Dr. Wu Fu Ya (president of Tainan Theological College and Seminary in Taiwan), chairperson; Rev. Dr. Ngoei Foong Nghian (president of Trinity Theological Seminary in Singapore), vice-chairperson; Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro (dean of the Silliman University Divinity School in the Philippines), secretary; Rev. Dr. Ezra Kok Hon Seng (principal of the Seminari Teologi Malaysia), treasurer.

New members-at-large of the executive committee are: Dr. Joyce J. Abugan (Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary); Rev. Dr. Jan S. Aritonang (Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia); Rev. Dr. John Titaley (Theology Faculty of the Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia) and Rev. Dr. San Myat Shwe (Holy Cross Theological College, Myanmar).

The assembly elected Rev. Dr. Limuel Equina (former dean of the College of Theology of the Central Philippine

University in Iloilo) as interim Executive Director for one year, effective in July 2009, during which time ATESEA will recruit a more permanent Executive Director and decide on the new location of ATESEA.

In his homily at the closing worship of the assembly, Dr. Equina cited three things that ATESEA should do. First is to identify what ATESEA can be the best at in the world of theological education - i.e. to emphasize the importance of discovering the Asian identity in our theological discipline and pursuits for quality and excellent theological education. Second is to identify ATESEA's "key economic denominator" in sustaining itself. Third is to re-examine what ATESEA is deeply passionate about in order to make a difference.

The assembly also approved a new structure of the association which was recommended by the outgoing executive committee. ATESEA will meet regularly every four years in a General Council, which will be composed of 14 members, including the Executive Director. Eight of the General Council members shall come from each of the national groupings who are founding members of ATESEA and 5 shall be elected at large representing theological, gender and ethnic varieties.

In terms of the future direction of ATESEA, the assembly affirmed that the two major foci of the association will be accreditation and programs.

ATESEA holds its General Assembly once in four years. This year the Southeast Asia Bible Seminary, a non-denominational seminary in Malang, Indonesia, hosted the assembly.

Hope S. Antone

New ATESEA officers: San Myat Shwe, Jan S. Aritonang, Joyce J. Abugan, Limuel Equina, Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, Wu Fu Ya, Ngoei Foong Nghian, Ezra Kok Hon Seng, John Titaley.



Pre-ICAAP Interfaith Conference



Conference participants

One hundred sixty men and women from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Shinto communities in twenty countries met in Bali on August 7-9, 2009, to strengthen faith-based responses in meeting the challenges of HIV in Asia and the Pacific.

The Pre-ICAAP Interfaith Conference and Skills-building Workshop was co-organized by AINA (Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS), Indonesian Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS (INTERNA) and the Local Organizing Committee of ICAAP, and in partnership with broad coalition of national, regional and international organizations.

Well participated workshop sessions with competent facilitators include: Building Partnerships between PLHIV+ and Faith Based-Organizations; Building HIV Competent Faith Based Organizations; Vulnerability in HIV Epidemics; Interfaith Collaboration, Rights-Based Advocacy and Networking; Networking with People Living with HIV and AIDS; Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in Faith Based Organizations; Tourism and HIV and AIDS; and Channels of Hope.

Chief guests were Dr. Nasruddin Umar, General Director of Religious Ministry,

Indonesia, who presented the keynote speech; and Dr. Zubairi Djoerban, 9th ICAAP Chair.

CCA is actively engaged in interfaith collaboration with AINA, and through its HIV and AIDS Consultant, Dr. Erlinda Senturias. "A Handbook on HIV and AIDS: Guidelines for an Interfaith Response", published by AINA and edited by Dr. Senturias was also launched at the conference.

The participants committed to united and coherent action among the varied faith communities to face up to HIV and AIDS in Asia. They also affirmed that "the value of sharing wisdom within this international, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious network is clear to us. We will strive to include more people in our networking, both within our own national borders and throughout our regional context."

The full conference statement can be accessed at www.cca.org.hk while the handbook can be ordered from CCA. For details, email cca@cca.org.hk

Erlinda Senturias

WCC: “Freeze and dismantle settlements in Palestine”

The World Council of Churches called on the Israeli government to “urgently implement an open-ended freeze in good-faith on all settlement construction and expansion as a first step towards the dismantlement of all settlements”.

The call was passed by the WCC Central Committee in a “Statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” in Geneva, Switzerland, at the end of its 26 August-2 September meeting.

WCC also urged churches to commit to non-violence and peace negotiations, and reiterated the need for an international boycott of products and services from settlements.

The Central Committee considered some 200 settlements with more than 450,000 settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories to be “illegal, unjust, incompatible with

peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel”.

Even as “Israel’s own right to exist in security evokes sympathy and solidarity around the world”, the committee states, “its policies of expansion and annexation generate dismay or hostility”. For the committee there is a clear distinction to be made “between the legitimate interests of the state of Israel and its illegal settlements”.

This action by the WCC Central Committee sums up the deliberations and actions of the Collaborative Advocacy Meeting of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) which met in Beit Jala near Bethlehem last June 11-15, 2009. The Meeting was attended by advocacy officers from churches, regional ecumenical organizations, church agencies and specialized ministries.

An Israeli checkpoint at Hebron in the West Bank





Palestinian small traders selling their wares in Hebron

Three days of reflection and animated discussion in small group and plenary settings resulted in a broad commitment to the ideal and practice of collaborative action. In sum, the participants in the PIEF gathering made the following commitments:

- We agree to support the WCC's call for PIEF participants to work collaboratively towards the aim of ending economic complicity with settlement activity in Palestinian occupied territories including East Jerusalem, as part of the overall goal of ending the occupation.
- We agree to take specific actions in line with our own organizational priorities, towards the realization of this aim, and to communicate and collaborate in action with other PIEF participants to the fullest extent possible in order to strengthen the impact of our work.

Olav Fykse Tveit, the newly elected WCC General Secretary chaired the plenary sessions.

CCA has expressed its support to the PIEF by committing the following:

- Circulate all advocacy/campaign materials to CCA member churches and Councils in Asia;
- Actively promote and recruit EAPPI accompaniers from Asian churches;
- CCA representation in PIEF and other ecumenical initiatives in the Middle East;
- Promote and collaborate on theology of land and theological reflections on the occupation of Palestine, through the Middle East Council of Churches and the Sabeel Centre for Liberation Theology.
- Support boycott of settlement products;
- Support the work and programs of the Peace for Life based in the Philippines.

For the full Statement, please visit the WCC web site: www.oikoumene.org

The Advocacy Meeting in Beit Jala was hosted by the Jerusalem Inter-Church Committee's Mr. Yousef Daher, along with Mr. Michel Nseir, and the Rev. Jonathan Frerichs from the WCC. His Beatitude, Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan led biblical reflections on the occupation of Palestine. The Rev. Dr.

Charlie Ocampo

Mission and affluence

They keep arriving, groups of mostly young people, their uniform T-shirts set them apart with slogans that identify them with Jesus Christ. They are met by their local missionary who loads them into a hired jeepney and they disappear out of the airport parking lot. These are the ever increasing waves church members who sign up for a two week mission trip and who define a new pattern in mission that has come to be known as short term mission.

Ten years ago, I found myself under attack after a paper I had read at a World Council of Churches (WCC) consultation, was published and circulated widely. In the paper I argued that an appropriate role for the WCC at that time was to assume the role of a Mission Tribunal, to settle and mediate mission misbehavior among the mission implementers. I argued that the WCC should have a standard based on a set of guidelines that churches could adhere to culled from a rich history of witnessing to mission misbehavior and advancing mission principles through numerous consultations and assemblies. When standards are violated by erring churches and mission personnel the offended churches could appeal to the WCC to intervene and apply correctional measures.

The idea of a Mission Tribunal was not what placed me under attack. The attack was provoked when I used the wave of missions coming from South Korea to make my point, citing numerous misbehavior and offenses among the Korean missions to the Philippines. I learned that provoking the South Korean missionary enterprise can draw a storm, and that there is space to be imaginative in difficult times.

But times have moved. Without the Mission Tribunal the South Korean missions have planted themselves throughout the Philippines mostly as extensions of their own local churches in South Korea. With the exception of a very few, these mission churches and persons are not channeling their efforts, energy and resources into the existing partner church structures in the Philippines, but rather are making a name for themselves and their sending church.

Into these enclaves of mission, guided and nurtured by a large church or set of churches in South Korea, come the short term mission teams. The fundamental disappointment of the partner church structures in the Philippines is the absolute by-passing of these local structures.

But this is not unique to South Korea. This mission paradigm is more and more evident in all the affluent nations. Perhaps the paradigm shift can be explained in this way: when once upon a time a single church could not support a missionary family for a year, they sent their meager funds to be pooled by the denomination or the council and the missionary was sent out by the denomination or council. Today the affluence of a single church can send three missionaries and build a school, church and clinic. Who needs the denomination or the council? When once upon a time to travel was only for the wealthy few, and entering a mission community required vaccines and inoculations to ward off deadly disease, churches turned to the denominations and councils to inform them about mission. Today the affluence of the average church member can afford to fly across the world, the vaccines of the word have eliminated most deadly diseases and with the development communication technology enabling a direct conversation by email or cell phone to mission community leader. Who needs the denomination or the council?

From the vantage point of this missionary, the paradigm is here to stay for sometime. Churches are more affluent than ever before and with this new affluence they want to be in control and involved with their mission initiatives. As denominations and councils who hold a legacy of principles through volumes of consultations on doing mission and partnership there will be a need to step up and engage this new paradigm creatively and learn anew how to play a role within the new paradigm.

Carlton "Cobbie" Palm
Silliman University Divinity School
Mission Personnel
Presbyterian Church, USA

Ode to Eternal Life

“...we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...” - Heb. 12:1

Many are those who have gone before
Who offered their life, their all
Resisting all chains and bondage of
domination
Proclaiming in word and deed the news of
salvation--
In the hope of a new world coming
Where every one is free to be
What they were meant to be

Their lives a testimony
A prod, a word of challenge
Daring us, shaking us
To heed the call and the mission
To stand up, as they did stand,
In faith and in obedience
And live up to the Gospel's demand.

“Others were tortured, refusing to accept release in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword...” - Heb. 11:35-37a

The blood of the martyrs are seeds
Of the struggle - sown and scattered,
Watered and nourished by cries...
Of anger and despair
Of hope yet a-borning
That the seed no matter how covered
Or pressed down deep in the ground
Will burst forth into the open
And continue to live and give life!

“... they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.” - Heb. 11:37b

The world called them fools -
And not worthy of this world:
They who dared to pick up the struggle
Who'll never hold the power and the
millions
Who live and move and have their beings
In the service of God and the people.

Death has struck them down
Death thought it has won
Death, a victor, up and dancing
Death -- arrogant in its striding.

But death be not proud, a poet wrote
You cannot mock us nor drag us down
You are but a passageway
That we must cross someday
Where life continues evermore...

Even in the darkest shadows
Subversive memories remain
Like the seed pushing outward
Taking roots, breaking ground

Death -- the martyrs you have grabbed
But gone is your venom and sting
For alive forevermore they are
in the bosom of Abraham

But more than that, they remain living
In the heartbeats of us
Who will pick up their cause;
Yes, alive forevermore they'll be
in the blood streams of our struggling
people.

*Reuel Norman O. Marigza
rmarigza@yahoo.com
Silliman University Divinity School*

[Read at CATS VI, Iloilo City, Philippines]

Mission possible

A hope and a future for war's children

Naw Paw Kue (meaning 'cold flower' in Karen) was three days old when her mother carried her while fleeing from a village in Karen State, Burma as she crossed into Thailand in May 2009. Naw Paw Kue is now three months old; luckily her mother, Naw Mue, was able to breastfeed her.

Imagine Naw Mue, who just gave birth with no post-natal care, and driven by conflict to flee their home, together with her husband, a three-day old baby and two other small children walked for seven days to seek refuge in neighboring Thailand. Naw Mue still could not see a future to go back home. Her husband, Jaw Kui once stepped on a land mine and lost one eye.

Paw Kue was refugee since she was three days old. Many children may not understand why they have to flee their homeland. But surely they will grow up hating the military and the war, traumatized by bullets, landmines, ethnic cleansing and other human rights violations.

Away from home

In the Thai-Burma border there are temporary camps where the Karen people, an ethnic minority from Burma, are residing under the protection of the Thai army. They receive humanitarian assistance from the U.N. High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR) and other aid organizations. But there is no telling what happens tomorrow and the day after. They do not know when they could return home or move somewhere else in safety.

The Karen people arriving at the border are depressed and whose future is unknown. What they intimately know is flight from bullets, guns and forced labor, leaving behind villages, houses and farms, cattle and belongings.

In the meantime the Thai government still refuses to accept another wave of refugees into the camps.

Baby Naw Paw Kue
(Photo: Janejinda Pawadee)





Mission possible

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) preamble provides that children are entitled to special care and assistance. As provided in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of her physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". The Convention applies to everyone equally, with special protection for particularly vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minority children.

Thailand has the obligation to assure that Naw Paw Kue and other children in similar situations will be protected and not be forced to return home for security reasons.

Baby Naw Paw Kue reminds me of the baby Jesus. After he was born his parents fled Bethlehem with him, for fear that Herod would kill him. The story of Mary,



Children at the camps. Is there really a future for them? (Photos: Janejinda Pawadee)

Joseph and their child reminds us that there are many children today fleeing from war and human rights abuses in their countries.

Persecution during Herod's time is no different from the present military regime in Burma. But the persecution did not make Jesus vengeful. Instead, Jesus brought peace and justice into the world and reconciled people in conflict. The challenge before us today is to nurture children who grow up as war victims into just and compassionate human beings.

As a Thai, I would like to see Thailand and other countries receiving refugees to welcome and provide them security. In the words of Isaiah (32:18): "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest".

This mission is hard to accomplish, but not impossible.

*Janejinda Pawadee
MEPP Coordinator*

Visit to Indian Churches



Photo: Philip Mathew

Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera and Rev. Dr. Sungkook Park with the bishops of the Jacobite Orthodox church

The Rev. Dr Rienzie Perera, Associate General Secretary for Finance and Relations, and the Rev. Dr Sungkook Park, Joint Executive Secretary of the CCA Faith Mission Unity (FMU) visited three CCA member churches in the southern Indian state of Kerala from 30 July to 2 August 2009.

They visited the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in Muanthuruthy and met with Bishop Joseph Mar Gregorius, Episcopal Synod Secretary, Bishop Kuriakose Mar Diascoros, Bishop Mathews Mar Eprem and Bishop Elias Mar Athanasius.

They also met church leaders including Baselios Marthoma Didymus 1, Catholicose of the East, Fr Dr K M George, Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Prof P C Elias, Public Relations

Officer and other church leaders of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (Catholicate of the East) on 1 August in Kottayam.

The CCA leaders were accompanied, among others, by the Church of Ceylon Anglican Bishop Kumara Illangasinhe, chairman of the FMU, Ms Susan Jacob, CCA Executive Committee Member, and Dr M P Joseph, Professor, Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan.

Later, Perera, Bishop Illangasinghe and Ms Jacob met the Most Rev Dr Joseph Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, and Rev. K. S. Mathew, Secretary of the Mar Thoma church, at their headquarters in Tiruvalla.

Philip Mathew

New leaders elected

The Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) recently elected a new set of officers. Mr. Dith Sareth, KCC General Secretary, shared that the KCC Executive Committee met at the Lutheran World Federation office in Phnom Penh on May 19, 2009 to elect its new officers, namely: Pastor Oum Sovy, President; Mrs. Vann Arun Rasmey, First Vice President; Mrs. Nou Kim San, Second Vice President; Pastor Men Savin, Treasurer; and, Pastor Sed Sarun, member.



New President in NCC Australia



The Most Revd Michael Putney, Catholic Bishop of Townsville, has been elected President of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA). Bishop Putney is the 6th President of the Council, following on from Bishop Richard Appleby (retired). At its meeting on June 25 in Sydney the Executive of the NCCA unanimously elected Bishop Putney.

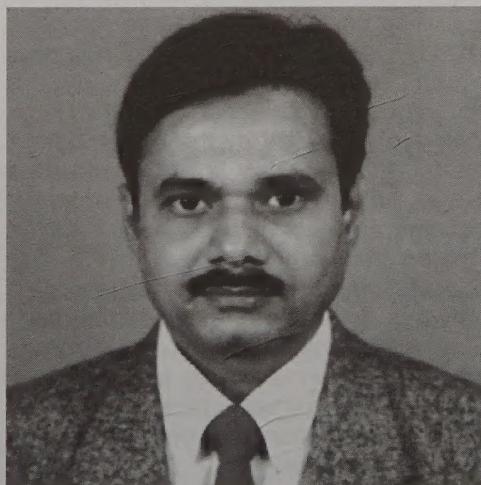
Many years of involvement with the NCCA, as well as in other ecumenical

endeavours nationally and internationally, have provided Bishop Putney with a broad understanding of the need for and benefit of the ecumenical movement. He has had an extensive ministry in the Catholic Church, including current roles as Chairperson of the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations, Co-Chair of the International Methodist/Roman Catholic Dialogue, member of the Uniting Church-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, member of the Permanent Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Patron of Townsville Catholic Education Arts Festival and Patron of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

Currently NCCA has a total membership of seventeen national Churches, including the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches, seven Eastern and Oriental Churches, and a range of Protestant Churches, the Salvation Army, and the Quakers. (*NCCA News Release*)

New general secretary

The National Council of Churches-Bangladesh recently appointed Mr. David Aniruddha Das effective 1 July 2009, to succeed Mr Subodh Adhikary as its general secretary. Mr Das is a member of the Baptist Church (BBCS). He holds a Masters degree in Social Science and in Christian Theology. Having been involved with the SCM, YMCA and other inter-religious and inter-church organizations in Bangladesh, Mr. Das is quite familiar with the ecumenical movement in Bangladesh.



Asia Sunday at McGilvary....



...and at St John's, HK

St. John's Cathedral observed Asia Sunday on June 14 with music and dances celebrating the variety of Asia's multiplicity of cultures even as Sri Lanka's pains and agonies were recognized and remembered.

The Revd Peter Koon, Chaplain at St. John's Cathedral for the Mandarin congregation and concurrent Provincial Secretary of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui was the main speaker.

Focusing on this year's theme, he said, "Today we are remembering Sri Lanka, which was colonised initially by the Portuguese in 1505. Thereafter, the Dutch took over, followed by the British before them. In time, this tear-drop shaped island, so close to India's southern tip, became an independent nation - called Ceylon in those days - in 1948. The peaceful co-existence that had prevailed between the multi-ethnic population of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers for a long-time marked by tolerance and non-violence gradually broke down as a result of socio-economic, political, cultural and religious tensions.

"Sri Lanka's quarter-century-long civil war is in its final phase, the government having eliminated the greater part of the Tamil Tiger forces that have fought for an

The CCA staff held a joint worship for Asia Sunday with the MacGilvary College of Divinity (MCD) of Payap University on June 26 at the chapel of MCD. Dr Prawate Khid-arn, CCA General Secretary delivered the homily to a full packed chapel. A special offering was taken for the peace ministry of the National Christian Council in Sri Lanka.



Photo : Estela de la Torre

Revd Dwight de la Torre

independent state in Sri Lanka since 1983. As many as 70,000 people have been killed since the civil war began."

Revd Peter concluded, "The small island of Sri Lanka is no longer the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean'; it is indeed the 'Tear Drop of Asia'. ...As David Jenkins, a former bishop, puts it - over thirty years ago, the fundamental issue is about 'whether I am trapped in being me, whether every tribal "we" is trapped in being an exclusive "us" and whether there is any realistic hope of a way of being human which fulfils us all.'

The observance were participated in by The Tenaga Kerja Indonesia-HK, The Thai Regional Alliance, the Friends of Thai, the Sri Lankan Association of HK, some students from Lee Kau Yan Memorial School and the HK Manmaeum Samulnor, a dance group composed of Korean young people studying in the different schools in Hong Kong.

Dwight de la Torre

Partnership with YWCA

Dr. Liza Lamis, CCA communications consultant, led a series of feminist theological conversations on violence against women, HIV and Aids, migration, climate change and sexual and reproductive rights of women at the Asia Pacific Regional Training Institute of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) on August 1-7, 2009, at Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. These conversations took place during worship every morning.

Liza also shared her feminist thoughts during a debate on 'sex is bad for young women' and chaired a panel sharing session on 'reflecting on the Christian basis in YWCA work in the 21st century'.

Some women participants expressed amazement at the biblical accounts about women that they have not heard before. For example, some said it was their first time to hear the story of Vashti who



disobeyed the king, and the rape of Dinah that resulted in further violence victimizing a whole tribe.

The women strongly agreed with the theological idea that women, as human beings created in God's image, do not deserve to be abused. Women need to speak out and be heard in their being abused and in their suffering. They should not remain silent and accept suffering to be a 'good' Christian, because a good Christian is one who follows the path of Jesus, the path of justice.

Both CCA and YWCA hope that this partnership will flourish and further enrich the ecumenical work in Asia.

Hanna Varghese, woman of art



Hanna Cherian Varghese, world renowned Christian artist from Malaysia, passed away on June 12, 2009 after a long battle with cancer. Hanna's family - husband Prof. George Varghese, children Georgina, Johanna and Sharmin, are members of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Malaysia.

Known for her colorful artwork on biblical and religious themes, Hanna was vice president of the Asian Christian Art Association from 1998 to 2003. In 1995 her work "Hope in God" adorned the

plenary hall of the Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Worship Book of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, of the Vatican and the World Council of Churches (WCC) under the theme, "Behold I Make All Things New," featured her work in 1999. In 2004 her art on the theme "Receive One Another in Love" was the backdrop of the conference of the plenary commission of Faith and Order (WCC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It became the cover art of the conference report. In 2005, Hanna did the logo of the CCA 12th General Assembly.

According to Dr. Hermen Shastri, general secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, there will be a small exhibition of Hanna's paintings during the CCA General Assembly in 2010 in Kuala Lumpur.

CCA is grateful to God, to Hanna's family and especially to Hanna, for the gift of beautiful art that she shared with us.



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